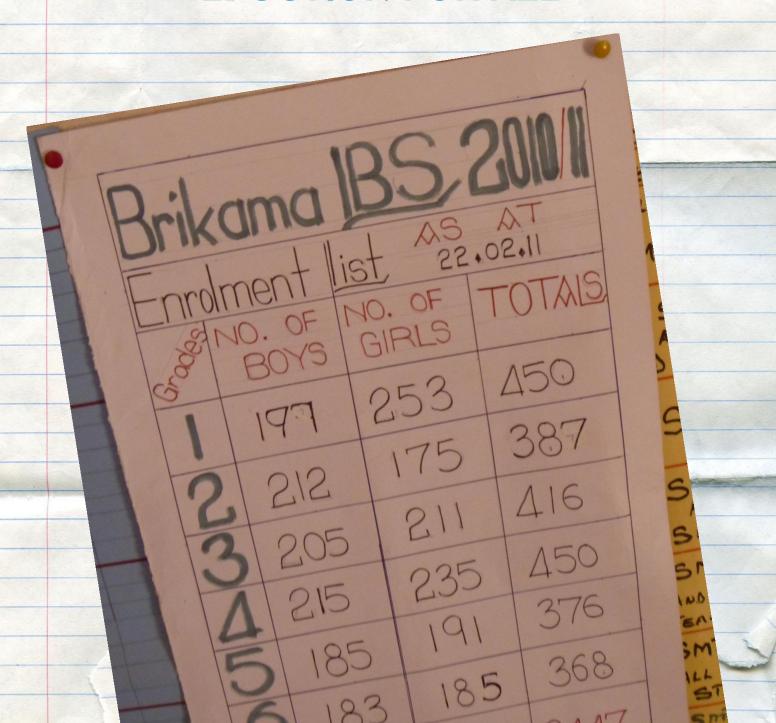


# PI-DOC 9: BETTER BASIC EDUCTION FOR ALL



## Inhoud

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### PI-Doc 9: Better Basic Education for All

All children have the right to good quality education. This is fundamental for their future. But what is good quality education and how do you find out if it exists in the area you are working? Building a nice school is not enough. This document gives some guidelines about how to improve the quality of education in developing countries.

#### 1 Learning

In order to learn, a child should be healthy, feel safe, and stimulated by its parents and its environment. There is a problem when, for instance, the parents are illiterate. Also poverty can be an obstacle: often children have to earn an income or with domestic chores. Then they cannot go to school regularly. Parents should realize that education is an investment in the child, and thus in the family. More and more governments set out to improve the preconditions, for example by focusing on safety in schools. In Kenya for instance, the new constitution states that children in schools are no longer to be beaten as a disciplinary measure.

#### 2 Teachers

The education and motivation of teachers are essential for the quality of education. Motivated teachers, with pedagogic and didactic skills, who teach in a varied manner, stimulate children's creativity. This concerns:

- attention for the practical application of the knowledge and skills the subjects which are taught are linked to the child's living condition,
- the use of various appraisal methods in the classroom,
- encouraging the pupil's self-confidence,
- a classroom management that increases the pupil's active learning behaviour.

Most teachers are, on paper, qualified to teach. However, teachers often indicate that they have not been adequately trained for their work. In most teacher training institutes the emphasis is on knowledge and little on the actual practice of teaching. The practice preparation is often too minimal - a few weeks of training per year. They practice, for instance, to teach 30 pupils, whilst the classrooms are often filled with 80 pupils or more.

In most countries teachers have little influence as to where they are placed, what subject they should teach and to which class. Teaching in remote schools in the countryside is less appealing than teaching in a school in the city. This affects the motivation and hence the quality of the teacher. The quality of teachers can be improved with extra training that will give them more teaching skills. Teachers will also feel more appreciated when such investments are being made.

#### 3 Learning content

Learning content is what children are offered as subjects for tuition. In most countries the learning content is defined in the national curriculum that is established by the government. Schools must teach this curriculum. Teachers do so by means of the 'teacher's guides' and teaching books. An

organization or school cannot change the curriculum itself. Organizations can however lobby the government to adjust the curriculum to the local context. Schools can choose to teach additional subjects.

Learning content consists also of text books and teaching materials. When books and materials are lacking, teachers sometimes develop their own means from materials that are locally available e.g., clay and sticks. Another aspect is that in many countries the language of instruction in the classroom is not the pupil's native language. In many cases in the first years of primary education the children are being taught in the local language and attention is paid to their own culture. This increases the children's reading skills, strengthens the link between home and school and increases not only their motivation, but also that of the teacher.

#### 4 Learning processes

Learning processes are about the interaction between the teacher and the pupil and the way the teaching content is being taught. The learning process can be focused on the child (*child centred*). Teachers often have knowledge of methods that can improve the learning process, such as active and participatory learning. But when it comes to applying these different teaching and learning processes, there is often a big difference between theory and reality. In overpopulated classrooms the most used method is frontal teaching (also known as *talk & chalk*). Adjusting the lessons to the individual learning needs of pupils is a real challenge. A good learning process is characterized by:

- the variety of activities there should be at least 6 different activities (listening, reading, writing, debating, singing, drawing, measuring, trading, explaining to other children, etc.) during each (part of the) day;
- the time a child spends on a task (time on task);
- use of learning means, e.g. course book and textbooks.

#### 5 Learning environment

The learning environment is the classroom, the school, the community and the structures in which education functions. In developing countries this infrastructure is often poor: buildings are to small, there is insufficient light, not enough seats, chairs or textbooks. This influences the quality of education directly. The quality of the learning environment is also crucial in the decision of attending school: the availability of clean drinking water and toilets determine whether children - and girls in particular – will be permitted by their parents to attend school.

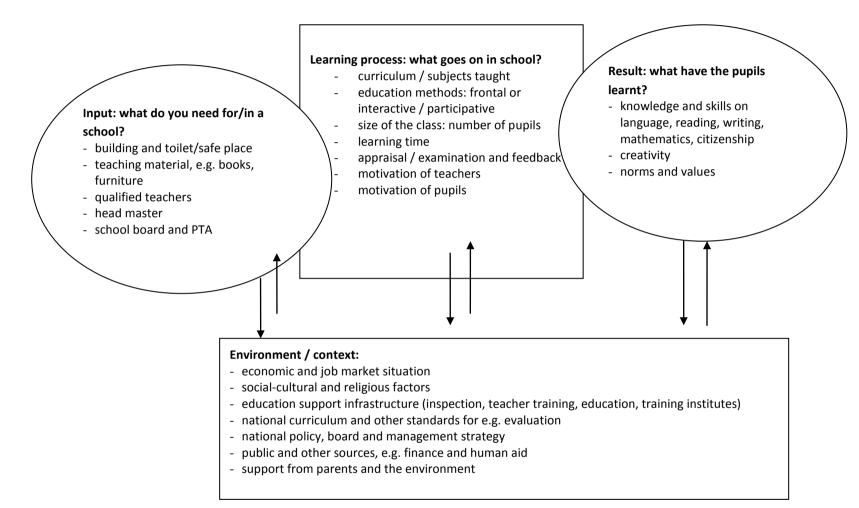
Besides the physical learning environment, the systems in which education functions are crucial: the school management, the community, the government. The education system makes the teacher accountable to the school principal, who is accountable to the education office of its district, etc. But there should also be accountability: towards the parents, the school management committee, the PTA and the pupils. Parents and teachers have official influence via parent teacher associations (PTAs) and school management committees. This structure exists everywhere, but doesn't always work. When many parents are illiterate their role can be limited. Trainings can substantially improve the parents' influence in education. This also counts for children's committees where children can make clear what is important to them.

The school inspection is also part of the official education system. In general, the inspections are of a formal nature, the emphasis is e.g. on administrative affairs or even searching for flaws or mistakes. In many countries people would like the inspection to be more geared to reinforcing and supporting education.

#### **6 Learning outcomes**

Learning outcomes involve the objectives education strives for. In many countries pupils work towards standardised objectives that can be tested in a national exam. All lessons are aimed to get the best exam results. The exam results also determine the pupil's chances for further education. Regardless of the nationally formulated objectives, teachers, pupils and parents all have their own expectations of the outcome of education. Teachers expect their pupils to come up with good exam results while parents can expect that education leads to a good income. It is important that all who are involved agree on the desired learning outcome. This defines whether or not children go to school and how motivated they are.

#### Quality of education: model for input, learning process, result and context:



#### Pitfalls and tips

#### 1 EXCLUSION FROM EDUCATION BECAUSE OF LANGUAGE, GENDER (GIRLS), MINORITY GROUPS, DISABILITY, ETC.

About one hundred million children still do not attend school, even though they do have the right to education. They are being excluded because they do not speak the language, because their group suffers discrimination or because they are disabled. It is important to pay extra attention to such children and to promote their participation to education.

#### 2 INVOLVE GOVERNMENT AND OTHERS

Education is a government task. Each country determines its education system and what children must learn. When working in a project for better education, always involve the local representatives of the ministry of education. The same applies for all other interested parties, like the parents, the community, children, teachers and principals.

#### 3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

When dealing with the project remind yourself that knowing is not the same as doing. For example, when introducing new teaching methods, it is important that teachers can also practice them with guidance. This increases the chance that they will actually use the new methods.

#### Supporting teachers in Indonesia

Teachers in Indonesia often use only one teaching method in primary schools; they recite, the pupils repeat after them. Pupils often do not understand what is actually taught.

The Dutch school foundation KSU has started a project in Aceh to train teachers to teach mathematics in a comprehensive, realistic manner. By means of tangible materials the children are taught numerical understanding and how to calculate. Essential is that teachers in the classroom are guided when using this method. The new method is more appealing to children since it offers variation and it is easier to use this method in everyday life. Participating schools notice that children pay more attention during maths lessons, and have better test results. By working closely with the local teacher training institute, the new teaching method can also be stimulated in the future.

#### Local language teaching in Peru

Indigenous people in the Andes mountains of Peru speak their own language, Quechua. There are far too few schools and the teachers mostly teach in Spanish. Children who attend school are not able to properly follow the lessons. As a consequence, a 12-year-old can leave school with the level of an 8-year-old. Another aspect is that the subjects taught are aimed at life in the city so that children have to learn all kinds of subjects about the city that are unknown to them. This gives them the impression that their own culture is inferior, a reason why many children quit school. The organisation Fe y Alegria improves intercultural and bilingual education by training teachers in their knowledge of Quechua and by developing new teaching materials. Besides, Fe y Alegria involves parents in education so their children will be sent to school at the right age. Schools that have been supported by Fe y Alegria have seen an increase in the number of pupils. Especially girls stay longer in school.

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